Topic: Rural and urban worlds in the formation of European identity

Description:

This topic will reflect on how urban and rural contexts have played a fundamental role in shaping European history. Attention will be paid to the different social hierarchies and differentiations which have existed between urban and rural populations in different periods of history. Likewise, processes of change and continuity in cities in Europe (and other parts of the world) in different periods of history are explained. Furthermore, a reflection is made on different views held of the rural population and peasantry, along with the economic structure of the rural context, marginality, inequalities of the rural population throughout history and the characteristics of their work. An analysis will also be made of the different periods of urban "boom" in Europe and the emergence and rise of the bourgeois and middle classes in European society. Finally, the processes of peasant resistance and citizen uprising in different conflicts will be examined.
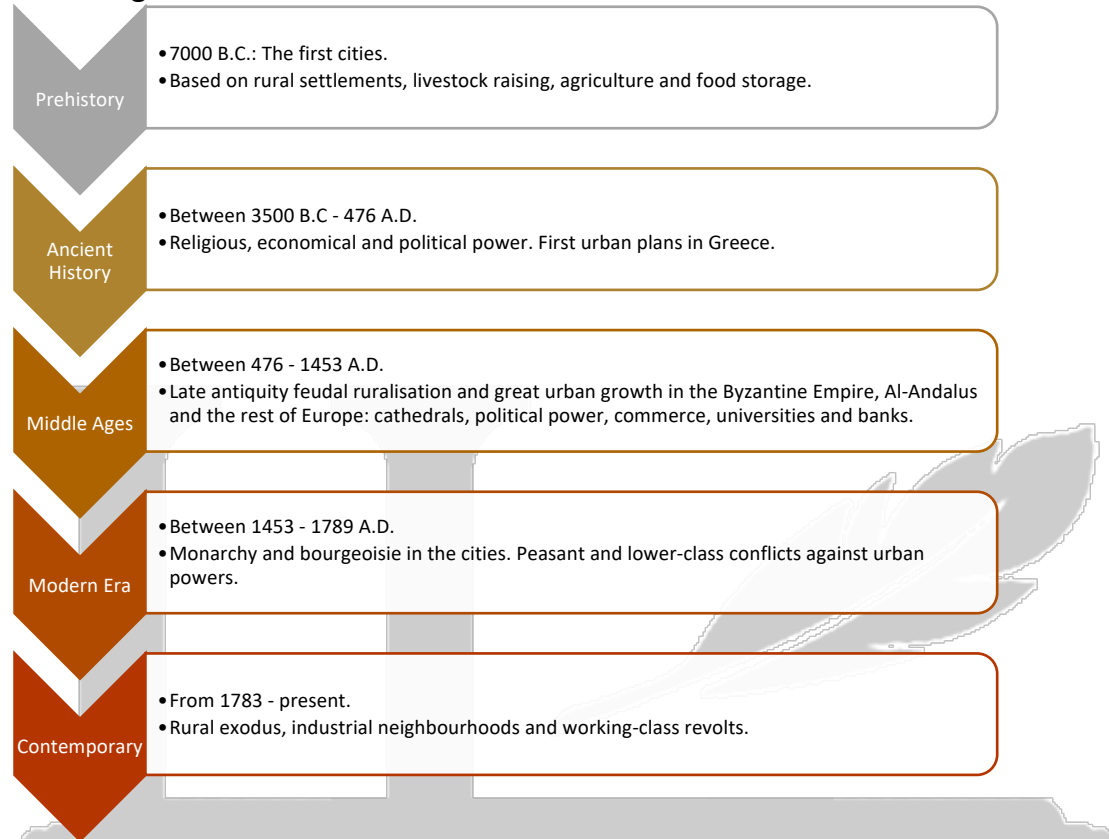
Concepts

- Urban population
- Rural population
- City
- Urbanism
- Economic inequalities
- Conflict

Chronological Axis

Prehistory
- 7000 B.C.: The first cities.
- Based on rural settlements, livestock raising, agriculture and food storage.

Ancient History
- Between 3500 B.C - 476 A.D.
- Religious, economical and political power. First urban plans in Greece.

Middle Ages
- Between 476 - 1453 A.D.
- Late antiquity feudal ruralisation and great urban growth in the Byzantine Empire, Al-Andalus and the rest of Europe: cathedrals, political power, commerce, universities and banks.

Modern Era
- Between 1453 - 1789 A.D.
- Monarchy and bourgeoisie in the cities. Peasant and lower-class conflicts against urban powers.

Contemporary
- From 1783 - present.
- Rural exodus, industrial neighbourhoods and working-class revolts.

Cities and peasant communities: hierarchy and social differentiation

21st century society in Europe, and indeed the rest of the world, is facing a series of urgent challenges which directly affect its inhabitants. These are the consequence of the process of globalisation which has arisen in industrialised societies: on the one hand, all of the problems relating to climate change and the sustainability of economic growth and, on the other, an ageing population and an increase in migratory flows. These two challenges imply that issues of space must be taken into account when proposing solutions.

On the one hand, demographic problems are progressively driving Europe, almost as a whole, towards an ageing population (as a consequence of the very strength of the systems of the welfare state promoted by European democracies following the end of World War II). This has brought about an increase in migratory flows (both external and internal) in order to satisfy the high demand for workers in an industrialised society.

Beyond the cultural (migrations, marginalisation), economic (poverty), environmental (pollution, mobility) or political (borders, pensions, etc.) implications, from the social point of view, people of working age fundamentally move towards cities, which are where economic activity is concentrated. This rural exodus began with the Industrial

Revolution of the 18th century, continued in the 19th and 20th centuries and has persisted in the 21st century.

The main consequence of this movement from the countryside to the city is that, in the 21st century, we live in essentially urban societies in which the (younger) urban population keeps on growing, whereas the (ageing) rural population decreases.

In terms of historical studies, the rural population has become increasingly "invisible" within the political, military and social processes of contemporary history. Thus, "a rural labouring class was too unimportant" and is practically ignored when learning history, as our vision of "urban aspects" corresponds to cities, which are the product of industrial expansion and the capitalist economy. However, it should be taken into account that, in other periods of history, the conception of "urban" and "rural" may have been different to our own.

In society today, the concepts of urban and city settlement may be similar or even synonymous but, in other historical ages, the concept of city, population or state may have been different to that of today. Thus, it is important to include the historical perspective in our comprehension, in which an effort must be made to understand cities in the context of their time and with their specific living conditions.

Thus, faced with this present situation inherited from the Industrial Revolution, which has led us towards a fundamentally urban society in which the rural population has been cut off from historical narratives, what social differences exist between the urban and rural populations?

At first glance, the urban population is that which lives in cities and the rural population is that which does not. However, there is no single answer and the definition of urban space implies a theoretical challenge. The context from which this question is asked can be extremely diverse: from cities with urban and rural populations at the same time (Murcia and the hamlets of La Huerta, for example), rural areas with the same services as cities or even urban populations which live in depressed peri-urban areas with similar difficulties in terms of mobility and technology to rural populations (e.g., La Cañada Real in Madrid).

Furthermore, the most commonly used administrative criterion in European countries is the number of inhabitants of each area, which varies according to the country in question. Thus, it is necessary to distinguish between urban and rural populations via new approaches which are not only based on the physical (city-nature) or administrative (inhabitants) context.

Taking these determining factors into consideration, two general criteria are established to differentiate between urban and rural populations in the present day:
- A greater proportion of economically active population.
- A greater proportion of population with higher education.

Having clarified the differences between what we refer to as rural and urban environments, urban development processes, as mentioned previously, are not a recent phenomenon but have progressively arisen over the last 8,000 years of our history.

However, it should always be remembered that urban development processes and the emergence of the first cities do not follow the same premises, not do they have the same intentionality of "modernity and development" as our cities today.

Indeed, urbanisation processes and the most ancient cities have been discovered by way of techniques of archaeological research in areas of the Near East: *Bestansur* (7660 B.C. in Iraqi Kurdistan), *Sheik-e Abad* (7560 B.C. in Iran) and *Çatalhöyük* (7000 B.C. in central Anatolia, Turkey). These first "modern" cities were the result of processes linked to sedentarism, the stabling of animals and the storage of products. However, in the following millennia (between 7000 and 3500 B.C.) a great "urban" momentum took place in the area of the Middle East known to the Greeks as Mesopotamia ("between two rivers") between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, in present-day Iraq and Syria.

This area was a focal point of urbanisation from its middle basin to its mouth, separated into the two great regions of Assyria (to the north) and Babylonia (to the south) with the latter divided into two great areas; *Akkad* (in the north) and *Sumer* (in the south). Thus, some of the most important cities of the ancient civilisations, such as Ur and Babylon, can be found in Mesopotamia.

Archaeological remains and written sources, via both cuneiform writing and foreign sources (Egyptian, Greek and Persian) have been found for these first cities. In general, they were cities with clear urban planning and social stratification. In fact, in these cities, which were settled thanks to the water channels which enabled agriculture, great religious temples (ziggurats) were built, along with administrative and political buildings (palaces) which formed the central nucleus of the populations and housed the political and religious powers of the dominant classes.

Indeed, in this first great urban age, the rural environment continued to work at full capacity (agricultural and livestock production). However, the sources available make no mention of any kind of political representation in public life. The network of canals and roads encouraged trade but rural areas were under the jurisdiction of the dominant classes, who lived in the cities (the king's family, priests, high-ranking civil servants and other landowners who were commonly designated by the monarch).

These city-states or city-kingdoms, which exercised dominion over large rural areas and local populations, held political and religious power and concentrated the commercial functions of wide areas which were interconnected. This was not only the case of ancient Mesopotamia. For example, there were also contemporary city settlements in Africa around the Nile, where vast kingdoms were created (Egypt), in the societies of Central America and the Andes (Mexico and Peru), in the Indus River valley (India), sub-Saharan Africa (developed around 1000 B.C.), in which great and complex political states arose with archaeological evidence being found in the highlands of Zimbabwe (*Mapungubwe*, *Khami* and *Torwa*), the interior and delta of the Niger River (*Jenné-Jenno* in Sudan) and the eastern Swahili coast and the northern plains of present-day China, where archaeological excavations in the cities of *ZhengZhou* and *Anyang* (2000 B.C.) coincide with population centres structured around religious or ceremonial centres.

When considering the case of the ancient kingdoms of Egypt, it should be taken into account that urban settlement arose for different reasons to the case of Mesopotamia. First of all, the concept of city-state on a political level did not exist. Rather, Egypt based its administrative power on the creation of a kingdom encompassing large areas of the Nile valley. In addition, the Egyptian cities did not receive much attention from archaeology until the second half of the 20th century (until then, attention had mainly been focused on the study of tombs and temples). However, there were several different types of urban centres in Egypt (towns, hamlets, capitals, etc.) which can be classified into two models depending on their origin: the organic city, which arose when a group of local populations joined together geographically (this is the case of *Nekhen*, between 3200 and 2686 B.C) and administrative cities resulting from the Pharoahs' drive to maintain their power over a territory, as is the case of *Amarna* founded by King Akhenaten.

The case of American cities is similar. Urban entities have not received much attention from archaeologists, although centres of population such as *Chichen Itza* and *Tenochtitlan* (Mesoamerica) and Cuzco and *Huánaco Viejo* (in the Andes) are pre-Hispanic settlements which can be considered to be true urban centres and which possess all the characteristics of urban centres:

- A large population for their time.
- A permanent settlement of population.
- A minimum density for their age and region.
- Urban buildings and street layout.
- A place of residence and work for the population.
- The fulfilment of some of the main functions of urban areas: market, political/administrative centre, military centre and religious/ceremonial centre.
- Heterogeneity and hierarchy of the population.
- An economic centre for the surrounding area.
- A different way of life to rural areas (only focused on agricultural production).

In Europe, the first urban centres appeared somewhat later (between 6200 and 5000 B.C.) and were established in the Mediterranean area on the Aegean coast of the Anatolia peninsula (Turkey) and on the islands and mainland of present-day Greece due to the influence of other ancient civilizations in the Mediterranean (archaeological remains of vessels bearing witness to a commercial relationship with Egypt and the Near East have been preserved).

Indeed, some of the oldest examples of urban centres can be found in mainland Greece: settlements based on trade, agriculture and livestock rearing, such as *Nea Nikomedia*, *Sesklo* and *Dimini*, where ceramic materials with an eastern influence have been found, along with obsidian materials originating from Egypt.

It was not until the Metal Age (between 3000 and 2000 B.C.) that the first urban civilizations can be found on the Greek coast with the appearance of the first Mycenaean cities (the inhabitants of which Homer called Achaeans). These new cities had clear urban planning: temples (such as the one in *Lerna*), palaces (such as the one in *Tiryns*) and acropolises (such as the one in Mycenae). Trade relations between Mycenaean cities and those of the Anatolian coast, such as Troy (founded around

3000 B.C.) were frequent and were essentially based on ceramics and agricultural products.

The establishment of urban centres in the north of Europe, however, came even later. There were three routes for the arrival of neolithic innovations from the Middle East to the Old Continent: the North African route, the Mediterranean route and the inland route (Turkey, Greece, Balkans, Danube). Urban innovations (such as the cultivation of wheat and barley, goat and sheep rearing, hunting and fishing activities and the first settlements with small huts) arrived via these routes.

Thus, to the north of the Alps, in the more temperate zones of the European continent, several examples of ancient cities can be found in Bohemia, southern Germany and central France, such as *Heuneburg* (Germany), *Závist* (Czech Republic) and *Mont Lassois* (France). These first cities later became *oppida*, as economic and trade centres of the Iron Age, around 700 and 500 B.C. (e.g., *Chalon-Sur-Saône* in France and *Hengistbury* Head in England), although some also had a political and ceremonial, more than a trading function (e.g., *Bibracte* in France and *Titelberg* in Luxembourg), demonstrating a significant influence of the urban centres of the Mediterranean area.

Greek urban development and its later expansion around the Mediterranean implied, without a doubt, the establishment of the urban way of life in Europe. The ruralisation of the prehistoric age had created new settlements and sedentary agricultural hamlets. However, invasions from Dorian population groups led to many peasants seeking refuge in fortified cities on hilltops (acropolises) between 1400 and 800 B.C.

The political stability of the Mediterranean area made it possible for these Greek *poleis* to prosper independently and to increase in size, to the point of becoming great centres of population. For example, Athens soon exceeded 10,000 inhabitants and merged with the port of Piraeus, enabling maritime trading across the Mediterranean. This led to the beginning of a period of Greek demographic and commercial expansion all around the Mediterranean Sea.

Thus, for the design of new *poleis* arising due to the growth of Greek thalassocracy in the Mediterranean, such as *Neapolis* (Naples), Syracuse, *Massalia* (Marseille), *Emporion* (Empúrias) and *Malaka* (Málaga), the Greeks developed a model of urban planning which implied more than a mere set of buildings and designed a complete model to provide a positive response to the needs of a completely civilised community.

Therefore, the acropolis, a high city, continued to exist as a ceremonial site and a refuge (in case of attack), while the population established itself in the *Asty* or low city. Here, there were public places such as the Agora (an open public space which became the political, social and economic centre of the *polis*), the defensive walls (due to the political independence of each *polis*, which could result in confrontations), recreational places, such as the amphitheatre or the stadium (dedicated to sporting events).

The most widespread urban planning model was the grid plan, created by the Greek mathematician Hippodamus of Miletus. Streets were designed at right angles, creating rectangular blocks of houses, and were divided in importance according to

their width: streets of 5 to 10 metres in width (main streets) and those of less than 5 metres in width (secondary streets).

One of the best examples of this model is the reconstruction of the city of Miletus following the destruction of the Persian Empire (494 B.C.), along with other Greek colonies in the western Mediterranean, such as Syracuse, Naples and Empúrias.

Roman civilisation grew at the same time as Greece, with the latter ending up becoming a province of the Roman Empire during the period of Roman dominance of the Mediterranean.

On a cultural, religious, linguistic, legislative and social level, Roman society inherited many of the Greek traditions, including, of course, the orthogonal urban planning models created by Hippodamus of Miletus.

Roman expansion took place in two directions: maritime expansion across the Mediterranean (eventually conquering all of its coasts) and inland expansion towards continental Europe. Thus, a complex and successful system of roads was built which enabled the mobility of trade, armies and the population in general.

Roman expansion obviously came into contact with pre-existing urban centres throughout practically all of the continent, from the *oppida* of the centre and north of Europe, to the Greek *poleis*, and cities founded by the Phoenicians (Middle East) and Carthaginians (north of Africa). However, in the course of their cultural and military conquests, the Romans did create new cities which became political and administrative centres for the management of the Roman system of government and economy, providing security to trade routes (which had already begun with the expansion in the Republican period).

The newly-founded Roman cities followed the orthogonal pattern proposed by Hippodamus. Housing was divided into quadrangular blocks cutting streets at right angles. The main streets were the Cardo (north-south) and the Decumanus (east-west), at the intersection of which was located the forum, a large public space which constituted the social centre of community life. Examples of such cities are Tarragona, Barcelona, Córdoba, the military city of León and Zaragoza in Spain; Évora and Braga (Portugal); *Aqua Sextiae* to hold administrative control of a region (*Aix-en-Provence*, France), Paris, Carcassonne, Narbonne in France, Mainz, Koln, Aachen and Bonn (Germany), *Spalato* (Split in Croatia), Vienna (Austria), Sopron in Hungary and Maastricht (*Mosae Trajectum*, in the Netherlands) situated at the most favourable crossing point of the River Meuse in order to control the safety of the inland trading routes.

The rise of urban life in Rome led to the concentration of trade, temples, palaces and wealth in cities, which essentially functioned as logistical and administrative centres for large rural areas. For this reason, they were also the preferred sites to invade and pillage for the people of the north.

Before the definitive conquest of the city of Rome by the Ostrogoths (476 A.D.), a progressive ruralisation of the population was under way. This should not be understood as a sign of social decline, as the cities did not disappear. Rural populations were strengthened as a strategy for resilience and to ensure agrarian and livestock production and the delivery of food to the population.

Late-ancient ruralisation was maintained in the west of continental Europe whereas, during the Middle Ages, great urbanisation took place in the Islamic and Byzantine Empires.

The different geographical, social and economic contexts make it difficult to draw comparisons between territories. From 500 A.D. onwards, the Byzantine Empire (the Eastern Roman Empire, with its capital in Constantinople, founded in 324 A.D.) grew strongly with its urban growth being replicated after 800 A.D. in Carolingian Europe and in Al-Andalus (Spain).

The division of political and administrative power into fiefdoms and small kingdoms, along with an increase in the power of the Church, led to different motivations for the foundation of new cities.

In Byzantine territory, efforts to increase urbanisation were concentrated on the recovery of some of the Roman cities which had been conquered by the Ostrogoths and Vandals (in Italy, Thrace, Greece and the Balkans). Particularly worthy of note was the urban reconstruction of the city of *Ravenna* by Justinian I in the 6th century following the Greek and Roman models.

In Muslim Europe, the emergence of the Emirate of Córdoba (711 A.D.) and the subsequent Caliphate, implied the creation of a large number of new cities in the Iberian Peninsula. Thus, Islamic urban development had as its main objective the military control of a broad expanse of territory across the Iberian Peninsula.

A fine example of the urban development of the Islamic *medinas* (towns) and *alquerías* (hamlets) in Europe is the foundation of Murcia (825 A.D.) by Abd al-Rahman II, which did not follow the traditional Greek and Roman orthogonal plans, but transformed the city into an intricate fortified labyrinth which was difficult to conquer. The streets were narrow and irregular, with no great spaces for common life and the mosque stood out as an urban and religious point of reference. Political power was established in the *alcazaba* (citadel), an elevated fortified area from which the city could be controlled and managed.

However, the division of power into small fiefdoms and kingdoms (or into convents and monasteries), which was common in Medieval continental Europe (both in the context of the Carolingian and Holy Roman Empires) meant that rural populations and areas were extremely dynamic. Contrary to popular belief, rural peasantry was fundamental in the establishment of feudal economy. Agrarian and livestock production remained stable (independently of who was in power), thus ensuring the subsistence and functioning of the system of vassalage.

This economic stability and dynamism brought about the gradual growth of the urban population during the Late Middle Ages (10th- 15th centuries) as the towns and cities again became strategic hubs for trade and economic transactions. The cities of the Late Middle Ages again underwent great demographic growth resulting in urban innovations such as the great cathedrals, open spaces for fairs and markets, bishop's palaces, buildings for exchanging and storing products, new walls, banking buildings (and the financial system) and the creation of the first universities (Bologna, Paris, Cambridge, Coimbra and Salamanca).

Trading relationships led to demographic growth and, as a consequence, to an increase in the power of certain European cities, for example, the free cities of the Netherlands and Belgium (Rotterdam, Ghent, Bruges and Brussels), those in Italy (Siena, Florence and Milan), those belonging to the Hanseatic League (a trade union between cities around the North Sea and the Baltic) and the newly-founded cities of Lübeck, Rostock, and Danzig, which collaborated with cities such as London, Bruges, Cologne, Visby, Falsterbo (Sweden), Riga (Latvia) and Novgorod (in present-day Russia). Other routes, such as the pilgrimages to Rome, Jerusalem (including the crusades to take the holy city for Christianity) and Santiago de Compostela, also increased trade and led to the creation of new cities.

The urban transition from ancient to medieval cities was not simple as, in most cases, human settlements were established in pre-existing cities. Thus, many urban elements remained and others were simply transformed. However, after 1492, the arrival of Europeans in America led to a new kind of urban conquest and expansion. The pre-Columbian civilisations in America were already complex, hierarchical and urban societies with more than enough scientific and mathematical knowledge in fields such as architecture and seed selection. Indeed, as has been mentioned with regard to Ancient History, the Mesoamerican plains and Andean areas were some of the first areas in the world to establish urban settlements, in spite of the fact that Eurocentric historiographic tradition has always presented them as indigenous and underdeveloped societies (this is comparable to the post-colonial view of complex African civilisations which also established important states and cities).

Although the Vikings reached the northern coasts of America around 1000 A.D., they did not establish any lasting or stable settlements. The archaeological evidence found at *L'Anse aux Meadows* is of temporary settlements dedicated to the gathering of raw materials.

In 1492, the Spanish caravels, under the command of the merchant Christopher Columbus, reached America (whilst searching for a route to the Indies). This marked the beginning of European conquest and expansion in America. During the Early Modern Age, the two kingdoms which colonised most were Portugal and Castile, who divided the "New World" between themselves with the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494). The vast empty spaces and the desire of the metropolises to establish new settlements to control the raw materials and trade led to a great boost in the creation of new cities. The advantage of these cities is that they were not subject to previous urban planning, as was the case in Europe, and could be planned with a new layout in a structured way.

Yet again, the orthogonal plans inherited from Greco-Latin urban planning and the Hippodamus method were chosen to erect the new American cities, as also occurred in the case of the new cities founded by Portugal in its African (Mozambique) and Asian (Macao) colonies. Thus, the Humanism of the Renaissance period again took up the plans for the "ideal city", which evoked those of Greece and Rome.

Notable features of these new cities included streets at right angles, square blocks of housing and central common spaces, particularly the parade grounds (indicating a clear defensive and military origin during the conquest), where the palaces of the

aristocrats and governors and the main church or cathedral were located (in other words, both the political and religious powers, which were always hierarchical and designated from the metropolises). Examples of this type of city include Buenos Aires (Argentina), Santiago de Chile, Havana (Cuba), New York (at first, New Amsterdam), Saint Augustine (Florida, United States) and Macao (China).

From the Late Modern period onwards, cities have undergone a series of morphological changes, brought about by new urban needs. For instance, the Industrial Revolution led to a significant rural exodus and the massive arrival of inhabitants of working age to cities.

Factories and industries were installed on the outskirts of the cities (extending beyond the old medieval walls and, in many cases, destroying them). This led to the need for new housing, concentrated in the suburbs and on the outskirts of the cities. In most cases, these were working class neighbourhoods, in which high-rise buildings accumulated to make the most of the space, leading to a high degree of massification and population density with the subsequent negative effect on public services such as education, healthcare and transport. However, the main consequence was the rapid decay of these urban areas and the creation of ghettos and marginalised neighbourhoods in economic, labour, social and ethnic terms.

The new urbanisation of these peri-urban zones followed different urban models: orthogonal (e.g., the Eixample in Barcelona), linear (the creation of Madrid's Ciudad Lineal) or radial, creating concentric circles following the lines of the ancient walls, as is the case of Milan, Moscow, Amsterdam, Bologna and the German city of Nördlingen.

In the 21st century, cities and urban planning began to experience new challenges: environmental problems, the decentralisation of institutions, the parity of neighbourhoods and the elimination of inequalities. These are, by no means, easy problems to solve and the urban continuities of previous centuries do nothing but make the task more difficult. The concept of the 21st century city includes the creation of more pleasant outskirts, with wider avenues and the inclusion of urban transport (trams, metro, bus), the creation and promotion of cycle lanes to increase safety and the use of environmentally sustainable means of transport to help reduce pollution levels in large cities.

In recent years, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, urban growth has been observed in peri-urban areas with large open spaces, parks and an abundance of trees. This could, hypothetically, pave the way for the future design and rethinking of urban spaces.

Transnational perspectives of peasantry and its identity in Europe. Social and economic diversity in the rural world

As stated above, there has historically been a complex difference between the participation of peasantry in socio-political processes and that of the urban population. In fact, these groups are in different positions of the "social order" within the globalised society of today, in which the bourgeois and urban social classes

maintain their (fundamentally economic) control over peasants and the rural population as a whole.

However, as was observed in the previous section, depending on the historical period and context in question, these differences change. In the current European context, political power (and the decisions it takes) is rooted in the capitalist economy, inherited from the Industrial Revolution, the main context of which is urban space.

In other words, political power and representation is still closely linked to the economic powers, which have their own areas of interest and influence in cities and other urban spaces.

Peasantry and the rural population have certain defining characteristics by which they can be identified. On the one hand, agrarian production has a discontinuous character due to the biological cycles of plants and animals and to their dependence on meteorological conditions. Although working the land requires continuous work throughout the year, much of this work does not offer direct economic results (clearing the land, pruning, thinning back fruit trees, ploughing, phytosanitary treatment of plants, looking after animals, etc.).

This is not the case in industrial production and urban capitalism, in which production in factories and warehouses is continuous and stable as the machines do not move and leads to independence from the atmospheric conditions.

In addition, in the rural environment, most of the products offered to the economic market are perishable and the great capitals which acquire them can dominate and impose the prices as, if they are not sold in time, they end up losing their usefulness. Large industrial corporations (transformation, distribution and sales of products from the countryside) controlling the prices of rural products is a detail of vital importance as it implies the persistence of an impoverished peasantry far removed from the great centres of economic and political power in our society, where there is an imbalance between the work done, the time spent, the physical effort made and the economic retribution received for their products, which often does not even cover the costs of their production.

In addition to these economic barriers, there are other obstacles by which the rural population in Europe can be identified. On the one hand, gender inequality still exists, as the work (both in agriculture and livestock rearing) is frequently carried out by women who either do not receive a salary or are very poorly paid. On the other hand, there are social and cultural obstacles due to the fact that as the work is physically hard and not well paid. It is commonly carried out by migrant populations, which settle in rural areas but which, in many cases, cannot participate actively (due to administrative and bureaucratic issues) in the political decisions of the area in which they live.

Bourgeoisies and urban booms in Europe. The social universe of the urban world

If, as mentioned in the previous section, the peasantry and rural population have traditionally been distanced from political and economic decision-making and, therefore, from the traditional historical discourse in Europe, the other side of the coin is the bourgeoisie and the urban elites.

Until 1830, there was really only one industrialised country in Europe: England. The rest of the continent was just setting out on the path to becoming an industrialised society and a liberal urban economy. For example, around 1850 in countries such as Spain, Portugal, the Scandinavian countries, Switzerland and the Balkan Peninsula, there were only 200 kilometres of railway. In 1830, the only European city with more than 1 million inhabitants was London, followed by Paris with more than 500,000 inhabitants. In all of Europe, there were only 19 cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants.

From the middle of the 19th century, Europe underwent a great industrial, economic, political and social revolution and experienced significant change from the countryside to the cities, where great industrial capital and an impoverished working-class population originating from rural areas began to concentrate.

This was not Europe's first great urban boom. That had taken place in Ancient History with the creation of the Greek *poleis* and, particularly, with the development of the metropolises of the Roman era. The importance of cities continued into the Middle Ages, both in the Islamic and Byzantine worlds, and there was even an urban boom which remodelled cities and saw them grow during the Late Middle Ages by functioning as commercial, political and religious connections between different kingdoms and fiefdoms.

In truth, any urban centre, from the tribal settlements of prehistory to the great megalopolises of the present day, functions as a space for trading, transfer and communication. However, cities today also have other functions, such as being the seat of different institutions (governments, religions, education, healthcare, justice, etc.), as well as hosting a varied population dependent on different professional specialities or fields of knowledge. Therefore, historical discourse has focused on the interests of the "specialised" urban classes and has repeatedly omitted the rural "subclass", which is considered to be "unspecialised".

This historiographical trend has not only arisen in Europe. In colonial America, in Africa and in Asia during imperial times, the history of socio-political, military and economic processes revolved around the dominant urban classes, which in Europe were called the bourgeoisie and in other contexts were known as the elites.

All human communities, in all periods of history, have been characterised by social inequality and hierarchy. This, of course, can also be applied to urban contexts because, although the history of the privileged urban classes has always been studied, in the same context it is also possible to find people without privilege who have been made "invisible".

In 21st century Europe, society is eminently urban and developed, which does not mean that it is homogeneous and equal, as has already been stated concerning the differences between the countryside and the city.

The urban bourgeois classes of present-day Europe base their political and economic power on the liberal revolutions of the mid-19th century, in which they consolidated their quotas of representative power to the detriment of other dominant social classes: parliamentarism in order to control the nobility and the monarchy (e.g., in England and the United States) and confiscation to control ecclesiastical power (e.g.,

Spain). Economically, the urban bourgeoisie, which arose in the 19th century, based its growth on industrial development, with the support of the cheap extraction of raw materials (imperialism and colonialism) and the control of salaries and working conditions of the working class which emigrated from the countryside to the city in search of greater job stability, even though it was just as badly paid.

Therefore, socially, European cities are characterised by a great economic dichotomy: in the same context there are bourgeois neighbourhoods with acceptable living conditions, better buildings, larger houses, better cleaning, better communication connections, better educational and cultural services, and other (normally peripheral) neighbourhoods with worse communications, educational and healthcare services, in which a more impoverished and working-class population is concentrated.

Between these two urban realities, there is the urban middle class, which originated from the urban growth of the 19th and 20th centuries, with citizens who, in spite of a lack of economic privilege, actively participate in the social and political life of the city, gaining access to the highest levels of education and intellect.

If, for example, the case of Athens (Greece) is studied, periods of economic expansion led to a great polarisation between the living conditions of the social classes: while the economic elites did not lose privileges, the middle and lower classes stagnated or became poorer. These situations require political decisions aimed at reducing inequalities on a large scale, improving the living conditions of the most depressed areas of the city, which can be transferred in the future to broader policies which help to articulate improvements in the living conditions of rural areas in order to reduce inequalities with regard to cities.

Marginalities and inequalities in the rural and urban worlds

In this section, the focus is maintained on the analysis of the European context, taking into account that it was during the Roman Empire that it became possible to speak of a kind of European unity, albeit nuanced, as it left out all of the centre, north and east of the continent and encompassed the Mediterranean coasts of Africa and Asia. As mentioned above, in Roman civilisation, which was extremely urban in nature, society was extremely aristocratic and unequal. In the later years of the Republic and the High Roman Empire, society was clearly stratified into two groups. On the one hand, there was the privileged class, to which one belonged as a result of property and wealth (fundamentally agrarian), due to inclusion in an *ordo*, or estate (senatorial, equestrian or decurional), or due to family origin. This class occupied the positions of power and prestige. Below them was a great heterogeneous mass of population, urban and rural, which was differentiated according to their economic activity, legal profile (freeborn, freed men or slaves) and their level of citizenship (Roman citizens, Latins or pilgrims). The patriarchal nature of ancient Roman society meant that it was also extremely unequal between men and women, although this inequality also depended on the social class in question. These differences due to sex could be observed in the political and legal spheres. For example, the *pater familias* held power over the life of his wife in the first centuries of the Roman Republic. Women were excluded from political

voting, aside from the influence they may have been able to exercise and their possible participation in certain assemblies. With the exception of the period of monarchy and the beginning of the Republic, certain Roman women were allowed access to education, although this was different for men and for women. The main social role attributed to the women of the Roman oligarchy was reproduction, from which the high social status of Roman matrons was derived. Last of all, women were able to divorce in Ancient Rome but, in practice, the possibility of carrying a divorce forward fell upon men in most cases.

On the other hand, as far as work is concerned, Roman women enjoyed great recognition in the field of religion as members of the colleges of pontiffs such as the *Flaminicas* and, above all, the Vestal Virgins. They could own lands and be merchants, although those of lower social status only worked with fabric, the production of ceramics and the painting of murals and frescos.

The aforementioned inequalities in Roman society became greater in the Late Roman Empire, with society becoming more hierarchical and polarised. An individual was classified depending on his/her birth into a social class and a certain trade. For example, the Theodosian Code declared that settlers were slaves of the earth to which they were destined by their birth. It was rare for peasants to be free and belong to other professions which were not subject to similar rules. The new social hierarchy imposed by the emperors guaranteed the collection of taxes to finance the tasks of the State. In general, Late Roman society was divided between a powerful class (*potentes*) and a humbler class (*humiliores*), among which some urban bourgeoisie could be found who made up the local senates. Thus, the most striking feature of Late Empire society was precisely the great inequality created between rich and poor by way of the taxation system, which was inflexible and badly distributed. Those who were able avoided their responsibilities, which fell upon the least fortunate. This led to social injustice and a great deal of dissatisfaction. Many citizens, faced with such high tax demands, emigrated from the cities to seek the protection of rural villages owned by great landowners. The latter managed to accumulate enough strength to elevate themselves in parallel to the power of the State, with many of them achieving a certain degree of autonomy in terms of taxation and military strength with regard to the ineffective control of the central government.

In addition to the escape to the countryside, the economic system of the Later Roman Empire led to many people changing trades in order to avoid their tax obligations: peasants who became settlers, craftsmen who became employees and *curiales* who swelled the ranks of the clergy and the army.

The Later Roman Empire was also a time of general confusion in the face of the disintegration of the traditional centres of power (the cities), which were the reference points of imperial legality, at least in Western Europe. In the cities, life turned in on itself. The construction of large public buildings fell and public life abandoned the forums and other public places and moved out to the suburbs and countryside around the cities.

At the beginning of the Medieval Age, the final disappearance of the Western Roman Empire implied the decline of urban life, which was exacerbated by the Barbarian

invasions. Trading activity, closely linked to city life, also reduced considerably due to the insecurity of the roads and the general crisis brought about by the fall of the Empire. Thus, in the middle of the 6th century, the majority of the population lived in the countryside and the cities which survived did so due to the fact that they were political capitals, episcopal sees, military fortresses of a strategic nature, places of worship guarding relics or due to the existence of small groups of merchants and craftsmen.

In this context of a rural majority, small landowners got by on what was grown communally. This was difficult due to the system of biennial crop rotation (the most widespread system), the use of rudimentary techniques and the lack of fertiliser, all of which led to low yields. Added to this was the part which was to be kept in order to pay tribute to their masters. Thus, it is not surprising that they had to seek sustenance in the forests or ask for alms.

Exercising power over this vast majority of poor people were the large landlords, who owned enormous extensions of land and who had no problem feeding themselves. Their vast domains had a part reserved for them and their families and another part divided among settlers, who, in exchange for the usufruct of the land, were required to provide the lord with a series of services in kind, in money and work.

As this occurred in Western Europe, in the political system developed in Constantinople, cities became the decisive centres of economic life, as powerful urban trade guided and marked the patterns of production in rural areas, whose products were traded in the cities for others artisanal goods. However, the basis of the economy and wealth was still the land, which was essential in the power of the dominant landowning and military aristocracy.

The urban life of the Byzantine Empire did not experience an excessive degree of social tension as state interventionism compensated the low salaries of craftsmen and civil servants with the payment of part of their salaries in kind, such as oil, wheat or cloth. Only specialised workers with complex tasks, such as those relating to silk, had higher salaries.

The roles of men and women in the Byzantine Empire were clearly differentiated. Women with a high social position spent most of their time in the gynaeceum, the room of the house reserved for them. Byzantine women had few rights, although some of the empresses played significant roles in State affairs as widows were established by law as the head of the family and they could be named as regents while their children were underage. In the cases in which women exercised power, they proved to be effective, as was the case of the empress Theodora, the wife of Justinian I, who played a significant role in keeping her husband in power during the Nika riots (532 A.D.), the worst eruption of violence in Byzantium. As a result of the actions of Justinian's ministers, the people and the Senate rose up against the emperor. Half of the city was set on fire and, when the flames drew near to the palace, Theodora shouted at her husband "Royal purple is the noblest shroud".

Compared with the ruralisation of Western Europe, Islamic lands represented a clearly urban panorama. Although the level of urbanisation was not the same throughout the empire, cities formed the foundation of territorial domination and

administration. Their importance was due to their political, administrative, religious and economic functions.

In the Islamic world, the commandments of the Quran regarding the subordination of women to men in Muslim society were clear. They were recommended to stay in the harem, which they could only leave in exceptional cases and in the company of an adult woman. Although they were not expressly prohibited from attending mosques, they were advised to pray at home. Markets, washing places and water wells were the only places in which women lived their social lives outside of male authority in rural areas. Inequality between men and women was also established on a legal level. In this regard, a man could have up to four wives, marry a non-Muslim woman and ask for divorce. His testimony in court had double the value of a woman's, fathers held the custody of their children and their participation in inheritance was double. None of this was recognised for women, although they were considered equal in terms of spirituality. In the present day, however, women are gaining more prominence in some Islamic countries, largely as a result of Western influence.

There were extremely diverse marginalised groups (such as astrologers, cripples, Jews and black people) in both Byzantine and Islamic societies. These groups were considered to be strange creatures, bad omens and bearers of misfortune. In the case of black people, for example, in both the Arabic and Byzantine worlds, where beauty was identified with white and blond features, they were considered to be "ugly". However, this was not always the case. In the Early Byzantine era, Byzantines did not marginalise black people, either in Byzantium or beyond its borders. As the centuries went by, however, black people became a rarity for the Byzantines, to the point that they were only found as part of the Muslim armed forces in the role of pirates.

The Muslim world, on the other hand, was more accepting of black people. Thousands of them were recruited into the armies and interracial marriages between black and Caucasian people were common, although white Byzantine women were considered more desirable than black women.

As the Middle Ages progressed in Western Europe, a society conceived in accordance with organicism was formed, considering that each class fulfilled a specific function, be it intellectual or manual, in a similar way to the parts of the human body. According to this theory, the nobility was responsible for protecting the land and the rest of society; the clergy interceded between God and man; and peasants, with their work and effort, were responsible for maintaining the other two, unproductive, classes. These three classes were extremely heterogeneous among themselves, and even within themselves, where different socio-economic statuses were present.

The reactivation of trade and demographic growth at the end of the 10th century brought about renewed urban development in Western Europe. This expansion was due to the creation of new cities and the reactivation of those which already existed. In these cities, the legal situation of their residents sought greater defence against the abuses and arbitrary behaviour of their feudal lords. Many communes appeared which defended a series of demands against their civil or ecclesiastic lords: guarantees in the exercise of justice, freedom of movement and the regulation of economic rights and the services that the lord could demand. In this way, many cities obtained the

right to self-government, with power becoming the responsibility of a council, which, as time passed, became monopolised by rich merchants, guild masters and aristocrats. However, it was in the cities that the highest rates of marginalisation arose. Perhaps this could be explained by the fact that in small rural communities there is a greater degree of understanding among people as they have known each other all their lives and extensive family relationships provide better protection. In urban centres, the marginalisation of the poor, delinquents, the sick, the crippled, homosexuals, heretics and Jews led to exclusion from certain trades, overcrowding in specific places, scorn, persecution, punishment and death.

Women were considered to be inferior to men in medieval times in Western Europe, often being considered to be men's property. Although they were not permitted to exercise the priesthood, convents and monasteries were created for them, in which they were encouraged to lead a pious life away from men. Reclusion in these places, although they continued to be in a position of subordination and were subjected to the designs of men, did not prevent some nuns from becoming cultured, writers and counsellors to other ecclesiastic leaders.

Upper-class women were encouraged to occupy themselves in activities connected with textile production and to behave in accordance with strict rules of conduct. In countries such as England and Castile, women were even able to reign, unlike other places such as Aragon, where their rights were passed on to male sons but were not personally exercised.

On the other end of the social scale, peasant or artisan women were only given the right to work if it was an absolute necessity for them. The domestic service enjoyed by many noble houses was carried out by girls who had been kidnapped in wartime and become slaves.

The aforementioned organicist conception of society began to experience problems in the 14th and 15th centuries, although the social structure was generally maintained. In the case of the members of the third estate, there were increasing differences in terms of position and activity. The urban bourgeoisie, made up of wealthy artisans and shopkeepers, merchants, bankers and civil servants, enjoyed great social and economic prestige as a consequence of commercial prosperity, the greater consideration granted to certain liberal professions (lawyers, doctors) and the growth of State bureaucracy. The aristocracy also became more heterogeneous as a result of marriages between members of the nobility and individuals from prosperous bourgeois families. The difficulties experienced by the nobility in maintaining its high standard of living due to inflation at the end of the 15th century and the inability of small land-owning peasants to satisfy their tax demands led to rural properties being transferred to the bourgeoisie, which acted as a moneylender in both cases. The dream of the bourgeoisie was to gain entrance to the inner circles of the nobility, as was the case of the Medici family in Tuscany and the Fugger family in Augsburg.

Whatever the case, what is true is that throughout the Early Modern period, economic development led to an increase in inequality in the distribution of income due to the reduction in the real salaries of peasants, artisans and the growing industrial

proletariat. Urbanisation and industrialisation led to a sharp increase in the degree of concentration of capital in cities.

It was in these same centuries of the Early Modern period that a change took place in the conception of poverty and, as a result, the legal treatment given up to that time regarding marginalisation was revised. The consequences of the Black Death and the appearance of the first experiments of a capitalist nature, along with a series of economic crises, brought about an increase in the number of beggars coming to cities from rural areas. Therefore, poverty was no longer understood as a symbol of humility but came to be considered as a cause of vice, delinquency and social depravation which required action by the authorities in order to maintain the social order. Thus, states developed new mechanisms to prosecute and repress groups considered to be morally dangerous, a social risk and a source of political instability, such as gypsies, prostitutes, pimps, vagrants, sluggards, crooks and beggars. With the aim of keeping marginality in check and, even, making use of this productive force for purposes of use to the state, a utilitarian system of punishment was imposed, which reached its peak in the 18th century and included "services" such as working in the mines, in the royal army or in the galleys.

As far as the situation of women is concerned, at least in Western Europe, it was not until the 18th century that a change took place in the way they were considered. At that time, women who reigned in large and small states, such as Russia and Austria, ascended to the throne. Discourses were elaborated on the role of women and civil rights and feminist politics began to be advocated. Such was the case that the origins of feminism must be sought in the controversies which emerged in the 18th century regarding the intellectual capacity of women and the desirability of their education. It was in this context that secondary schools were set up in order to complete the primary education of young women, although the teaching, aimed at the affluent classes, focused on tasks traditionally reserved for women (sewing, singing, music), along with reading and writing and even a foreign language (most commonly French). However, feminism, imbued with the rationalism and egalitarianism of the French Revolution, would have to wait several decades until, at the end of the 19th century, the suffragette movement of English women and the feminist movement of continental Europe took up the torch of the enlightened elites with the aim of achieving true political emancipation, although the right to vote did not imply social and labour equality between sexes. Most women only worked in domestic tasks, either within the confines of married life or in the homes of the affluent classes, where salaries were extremely low. Some women became teachers due to their cultural level and only at the end of the century did they gain more employment possibilities as the number of businesses, factories and workshops grew.

In the 19th century, the relationship between the countryside and the city experienced a turning point, which would continue, and even intensify, to the present day as a result of the rural exodus due to industrialisation. Indeed, the installation of factories in cities, in conjunction with the mechanisation of agricultural tasks and the end of community-owned lands forced thousands of former countryside-dwellers to seek employment in the manufacturing and tertiary sectors in cities. This slow process was

more intense in Western Europe (England, Belgium, Holland, France, Germany). Initially, the mass arrival of inhabitants led to the disordered growth of cities with the appearance of insalubrious and polluted neighbourhoods crammed with workers, as described by Engels. However, in the second half of the century, plans for urban organisation were implemented with the suburban development of cities such as Paris, Stockholm and Barcelona, as mentioned above.

In 19th century society, social inequalities continued to be extremely intense, both in terms of wealth and in social perception, due to the custom of prioritising distinction, inherited from the Ancien Régime, particularly in Europe. This, however, was not so much the case in the United States, which was built on a more democratic tradition and was less influenced by privilege. The process of industrialisation and the transition from an estate society to one based on classes did not imply, as has been stated above, a greater degree of equality. Aristocrats who owned the land and the bourgeoisie who owned the factories and trading companies monopolised the administrative and political positions of European states. On the other hand, an enormous mass of peasants, most without land and subsisting thanks to the communal way of life of their villages, and a growing industrial proletariat, with only its ability to work permitting it to subsist, was on the rise. It was not until the 20th century, particularly its second half, that the policies of the welfare states succeeded in achieving a greater and better distribution of wealth, at least in Western Europe. In the case of true socialist countries, social achievements and more equality were obtained at the expense of individual rights and freedoms.

As far as women are concerned, it was not until World War I, due to their work in factories in the rear-guard and as nurses on the front lines, that their situation began to change, leading to their access *en masse* to work in the industrial sector at the end of the conflict, a situation which continued in the second post-war period.

Having gained suffrage in most Western European countries following World War II, the feminist movement experienced a halt in its activity, which restarted in the 1960s and focused on new demands relating to the right to abort, divorce and birth control, as well as an improvement in the intellectual education of women, with the aim of increasing their possibilities for social and labour development.

Peasant resistance and urban riots in the history of Europe. Differences in conflicts against authority

Continuing the beginning of this section in the Roman Empire, for the reasons previously stated, the centre of life in the Empire were its cities. Thus, it can be classified as an urban empire. During the first two centuries of our era, cities were the fundamental element of Roman political building, to the point that the crisis suffered by cities, beginning in the 3rd century, was also the crisis of the Empire. It was in this context, during the Later Roman Empire (3rd-5th centuries), that the armed peasant revolts known as *bagaudae*, took place, particularly in the territories of Gaul, Hispania and Africa, with the latter case also having a religious dimension. These were struggles of the intermediate groups of society, which ran the risk of becoming proletarianised

and impoverished as a result of the increase in the tax burden, which became unbearable, particularly for small and medium landowners. This tax burden led to the phenomenon of the urban exodus (from the city to the countryside) becoming more frequent than the rural exodus (from the countryside to the city) in this period.

There is not much evidence of social conflict in the Early Middle Ages (6th-10th centuries). With more than 90% of the population living in rural areas, it was relations in the countryside which led to the tensions and resistances of the time. In this regard, it is possible to distinguish two types of mobilisations aimed at halting the progress of aristocratic power, be it civil or ecclesiastic, which monopolised agrarian land and worsened the conditions of the workers. On the one hand was the peasant resistance, expressed via the exodus, complaints or the defence of community uses; on the other hand were the armed rebellions of a general nature, which were scarce and badly-documented, such as the Stellinga uprising in Saxony (841-842) or that of the Norman peasants (966-967).

From the 11th century onwards, Europe underwent a period of economic and demographic growth which made it possible to improve communications between European regions whilst the process of work distribution accelerated, favouring the appearance or resurgence of merchant cities, and within them, a bourgeoisie of artisans and merchants. The cities filled up with peasants escaping from the dominion of the rural lords and taking up artisanal trades: cobblers, carpenters, weavers, etc.

The growing importance of urban centres had an impact on the reorientation of foreign policy and wars were substituted by trade disputes.

However, cities were not as numerous nor did they acquire as much importance as is normally attributed to them, and neither were they ever centres of equality or oases of freedom. Although men were free and legally equal, their inhabitants were differentiated by their wealth. Only a small number of people formed part of the so-called Urban Patriciate with full rights. This group was made up of the biggest fortunes of each city, who fixed prices, salaries and taxes and were the city's representatives before the central government. They were responsible for supplying the city and organised and controlled production via the guilds. As long as their interests coincided with the general interests of the city, their authority was accepted, but, when this was not the case, when they appeared to place their own personal gain before the general good, the city's inhabitants would rebel against them, particularly in the period of crises between the 14th and 15th centuries.

To political inequality must be added economic disparities. It was this very same Urban Patriciate which monopolised municipal positions of responsibility via those who controlled the city, making use of the opportunity to increase their economic power, for example by selling at excessively high prices, making late and incorrect

payments for the products they acquired and renting their properties at abusive prices.

In the second half of the 13th century, this situation brought about the revolts of the guilds, led by the masters in the face of the abuses of the Urban Patriciate, as occurred in the merchant cities of Flanders (Bruges, Ypres, Ghent), those of the north of Italy (Bologna, Florence), France (Orleans, Rouen) and Barcelona. The nature of these urban uprisings was different as, on occasions, members of the Urban Patriciate (normally wealthy merchants) joined the artisans to oust the nobility from power, while, on other occasions, the patricians sought equality with the nobility, whose customs and lifestyle they attempted to imitate.

Contrary to common belief, the guilds which led these revolts were not revolutionaries seeking social transformation. Rather, they aimed either to join the patriciate or overthrow it to gain access to the political and economic leadership of the city. When they were successful, the guild masters employed their new power to reduce competition, limiting the number of workshops, reducing possibilities to become masters and doing everything possible to combat other trades. The common people were disorganised and did not participate in these confrontations or, if they did so, it was spontaneously, on specific occasions and for particular causes, such as food shortages or tax burdens.

Therefore, organised municipal movements, led by guild masters, coexisted with the revolts of anarchists who vented their hatred by burning the houses of patricians or Jews, who they blamed for the calamities afflicting the population. On other occasions, these revolts were the consequence of laws introduced to avoid raising salaries. In Portugal, Castile, France and England, workers were obliged to work for a previously established salary and begging was punished, thus favouring the rich by providing them with cheap labour. The revolts only became successful when they were led by leaders of the urban bourgeoisie, as was the case of the Parisian revolts of the 14th and 15th centuries, such as the *Cabochien Revolt* (1413), the *Ciompi Revolt* in Florence, and the conflict between *La Busca and La Biga* in Barcelona (1453).

Economic and social inequalities were also reproduced in rural areas. However, peasant uprisings against the power and abuse of the lords lacked organisation and were isolated in nature. In the case of northern Italy, the preaching of Fra Dolcino regarding the abolition of repressive hierarchies and a return to an evangelical society launched the peasantry into a revolt against the nobility which was subsequently quashed. In Flanders, the peasant uprising was a result of high county taxes and ecclesiastical tithing. English peasants rose up against the abuses of their lords, who demanded more services than were due. Galicia witnessed the *Irmandiño Revolts* and Catalonia the Wars of the *Remences*.

In the mid-14th century, as a result of wars and the Black Death, a sharp decrease in population in the countryside took place. In an attempt to maintain agricultural production and their own livelihood, landowners sought new labourers to work the land by establishing new salaries and making agricultural work obligatory for those without employment and beggars. Attempts were made to tie peasants to the land by way of rental contracts with low prices and long durations in order to occupy and exploit abandoned land. Thus, the peasant revolts of the 14th and 15th centuries had the aims of maintaining the economic improvements achieved as a result of the plague and fighting against feudal entitlements. This was the case of the *Jacquerie* (1358) and *Tuchin* revolts (1379-1384) in France and the *Lollard Revolt* in England due to the Hundred Years' War (1381).

The economic and social ascendency of urban merchants was more noticeable during the 16th century, as was the growing gulf between the rich and the poor. The latter were mainly peasants who had moved to the cities, where they became beggars and vagrants, as a result of the crisis of the Late Middle Ages.

However, with the arrival of the Reformation, the view held of poverty in Europe changed compared to the medieval centuries, as charity provided the faithful with a way to achieve the Kingdom of Heaven. The situation began to change with the crisis of the Late Middle Ages by the differentiation between the "honest" poor, who it was necessary and lawful to help, and the "dishonest" poor, who were aggressive wanderers and could carry and transmit disease and were to be punished.

In this regard, cities such as Paris (in 1516) adopted measures against vagrants and beggars, which included their expulsion from the city. Those who remained were required to work in tasks of fortification or in the sewers in exchange for food. Similar decisions were adopted in cities in Italy, Spain, Germany and Holland during the following decade, coinciding with years of shortages which led to riots in many European cities. In 1522 in Nuremberg, assistance to the poor was centralised, as also occurred in Strasbourg (1523) and in Ypres (1525). in 1526, Juan Luis Vives published *De subventione pauperum*, and in 1531 an imperial edict of the Holy Roman Empire sanctioned the initiatives of the cities and established rules regarding social policy and the reorganisation of aid to the destitute.

There was also an abundance of peasant revolts throughout the 16th century. The Revolt of the Comuneros (1521) in Castile was in opposition to the feudal offensive, combining peasant complaints with those of the thriving urban bourgeoisie angry at their exclusion from power. In France, the revolts were against taxation, for example, in Aquitaine, where the announcement of a new tax on salt (the *gabelle*) led to an uprising throughout the region in 1548.

The crisis of traditional industry, along with growing pressure from the nobility to collect their income, also led to uprisings of marginalised groups, such as the *Moriscos*

of the Alpujarras (1568), affected by the crisis of the silk industry. On other occasions, the process opened by the Protestant Reformation led to significant episodes of peasant revolt, as in the Holy Roman Empire in 1524-1525, when priests who had crossed over to the Reformist camp supported attempts for freedom from old feudal serfdom with religious arguments, as was the case of Thomas Müntzer.

The situation did not improve in the following century when a process that can be referred to as refeudalisation took place. Indeed, the social conflict, caused by economic aspects, became even more intense. This process of refeudalisation was stronger in Eastern Europe, where the ecclesiastic and noble landlords sought to compensate the reduction in price of agricultural products exported to the West via an increase in feudal taxes imposed on peasants. In Russia, for example, peasants were no longer able to decide to leave the land after 1590 and the time period during which a landowner could pursue heads of family or any other member of the community who had escaped was extended before it was eventually abolished in 1649. Thus, Russian peasants became serfs whom the lord could sell with or without the land. The number of obligatory days of work in the lord's demesne was also increased. Taking this situation into account, it is not surprising that hatred towards landowners led to violent revolts breaking out, such as those of 1670 in the basins of the Volga and Don Rivers.

It can also be said that there was a process of refeudalisation in Western Europe due to the concentration of lands, the proletarianisation of the peasantry and the ennoblement of the merchants. The assault on agricultural income was caused by the dominant classes and the State itself, with the latter introducing tax increases to cover the costs of wars. Landowners, with the support of the State, were able to maintain their rights, regarding both the defence of their lands and by way of the re-establishment of their old feudal rights. Thus, they were able to appropriate the communal lands of the villages, which were the main source of sustenance for the poorest families. The result was the impoverishment and indebtment of the peasantry, which responded violently with revolts such as the *croquant rebellions* (1636-1637) and the *Revolt of the va-nu-pieds* (1639) in France. The end result of all this was an increase in poverty in Europe which, according to the prevailing religious confession, received one treatment or another, tending more towards charity in Catholic countries and distrust in Protestant areas.

In the case of revolts such as those of the *Fronde* in France (1648-1654), the convergence of interests of the artisans, bourgeois merchants and nobility concerning an increase in taxes gave rise to many interpretations.

The following century saw debate regarding the need to modify the social hierarchy, which implied calling into question the very structure of Late Feudal society. However, before this crystalised into the revolutionary events of 1789 onwards, the 18th century was one in which the aristocracy achieved its highest levels of refinement, as the

foundations of its power not only remained intact, at least until the end of the century, but also increased; to tax privileges, agricultural land, and the occupation of high-ranking administrative positions, the military and clergy added investment in sectors such as trade and industry. However, the bourgeoisie managed to impose its worldview, in which enhancement of and desire for more wealth were the new yardsticks for measuring social class. It was also the case that the so-called bourgeoisie was an extremely heterogeneous group consisting of large traders and merchants, the liberal professions, medium and low-ranking civil servants, transport entrepreneurs, intermediaries, etc. Furthermore, along with the process of ennoblement, personal effort, intelligence and hard work were promoted in order to occupy the first steps of the social pyramid. This was the case at least in France and Spain. In England, there was also a new and powerful industrial bourgeoisie. In the rest of the continent, there was less strength and dynamism.

The rest of society, consisting mainly of peasants and farmhands in rural areas and artisans in the cities, did not benefit at all from the generalised economic growth of that century. In France, they even suffered a reaction from the aristocracy in the years preceding the Revolution, seeing their communal rights reduced, taxes increased and suffering famine as a result of the lack of salary increases. In Great Britain, the expropriation and expulsion of peasants from their lands led to them becoming proletarianised, having to migrate to the cities in search of sustenance. The industrial proletariat crammed into the peripheries of the urban centres began to take shape, seeking work in construction, textile workshops or in the ports.

In the 19th century, Europe was still fundamentally rural, in spite of the rural exodus and emigration to other continents. However, the situation of the peasantry in Western Europe, where there were owners and tenants of small-holdings along with a large number of day labourers, was different from the eastern part, where many peasants continued to be under servitude until 1848 (Austrian Empire) and 1861 (Russian Empire). The end of the assignment of the peasantry to the land implied the recognition of legal equality for millions of people.

The social conflicts of the 19th century mainly involved the industrial workers of the cities (the proletariat) and the peasants of the rural areas. They were a response to the new capitalist economic structures and the politics of liberalism, particularly on the part of the proletariat, which worked in terrible conditions in urban factories (low salaries, 12-14-hour days, lack of safety, child labour). Of particular significance in England was the Luddite movement and its destruction of a large number of mechanical looms in the 1810s. This type of struggle also occurred in other countries, such as France, Spain and the German Confederation. Also in England, in the 1830s, the followers of the "Captain Swing" movement destroyed a large number of threshing machines. These were more than just protests or reactions against the threat to employment arising from the introduction of machines. They also demanded improvements in salaries and working conditions. It was not until the proletariat

became aware of class that the first true workers' organisations, such as trade unions and political parties (the latter in the second half of the century thanks to the impetus of the scientific socialism of Marx and Engels) were created. Indeed, the participation of the industrial working classes was noteworthy in the revolutions of 1830, 1848 and in the Paris Commune of 1871.

The new industrial civilisation of the 20th century brought about a new type of social relations which lent particular importance to the collective actions of workers and peasants. This phenomenon was brought to the world's attention with the triumph of the Russian Revolution. In Western Europe, however, its impact was less intense due to the development of the *welfare states* and the recognition of social and collective rights

The last third of the 20th century witnessed the emergence of new social movements demanding, among other things, world peace, respect for the environment, the rights of minorities and the recognition of the social role of women.

Glossary of concepts
- Rural: belonging to or relating to the countryside and its activities.
- Urban: belonging to or relating to cities.
- Revolt: riot or alteration of public order.
- Migration: displacement of population from one place to another implying a change of residence, generally due to economic or social causes.
- Peasantry: social class living in the countryside dedicated to agricultural production.
- Urban Patriciate: group of people and families dominating the political life of a city, accumulating the majority of its wealth and social prestige.
- City: ensemble of buildings and streets, governed by a council, with a dense and numerous population dedicated in general to non-agricultural activities.
- Rural exodus: displacement of population from rural areas to cities.
- Population: group of people living in a certain place.
- Urbanisation: increase in the population living in cities, implying the physical growth thereof.
- Ruralisation: historically, the transfer of population from cities to the countryside, which becomes the centre of economic life.
- Population density: average number of inhabitants per km^2 in a specific territory.
- Hippodamian plan: way of organising the design of streets at right angles, creating rectangular blocks, thus leading to a city in the form of a grid.
- Periphery: the area of the city most distant from the urban centre.
- Ghetto: neighbourhood or suburb in which people who are marginalised by the rest of society live.
- Burg: in the Middle Ages, a fortified military site around which merchants and artisans began to settle, creating centres of population around the forts.

- Bourgeoisie: in the Middle Ages, inhabitants of a Burg or city. Later, it came to identify a social class dedicated to trade, industry and finance, which became dominant in the capitalist system of economics.
- Polis: in ancient Greece, an autonomous state constituted by a city and a small territory.
- Marginalisation: the situation of placing a person or group of people in conditions of social, political or legal inferiority.
- Inequality: a disparate social and economic situation between people.
- Guild: in the Middle Ages, a socio-economic organisation formed by the masters, officials and apprentices of a particular profession or trade, governed by particular decrees or statutes.
- Rebellion: an act of resistance or disobedience to authority.
- Landowner: a person who owns lands, particularly large agricultural areas.

Web resources

Chronological axis in Genial.ly:

https://view.genial.ly/61e0626896763d0de454f6b3/interactive-content-rural-and-urban-world

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